



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

October 12, 2005

News Release

49 CHARGED IN FEDERAL COURT

Milwaukee “Latin Kings” named as a racketeering enterprise engaged in violent offenses such as murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and arson

MILWAUKEE — The local chapter of the “Latin Kings” street gang engaged in an eight-year span of violent activity, including: murder, attempted murder, drug trafficking, robbery, kidnapping, arson, home invasions, drive-by shootings and intimidation of witnesses, according to an indictment unsealed in federal court today. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) assisted in the investigation.

Following a multi-year federal, state and local task force investigation, 49 members of the Latin Kings street gang were charged in federal court in Milwaukee with racketeering, drug and firearms offenses. Also today, federal, state and local law enforcement officers arrested numerous suspects and executed 15 federal search warrants in the Milwaukee area.

The 38-count indictment charges that the Latin Kings operated as a criminal RICO enterprise in Milwaukee and other parts of Wisconsin from January 1998 through Sept. 27, 2005, the date of the indictment. The indictment contains specific allegations regarding four murders and 38 attempted murders were committed by the defendants.

The indictment alleges that the Latin Kings had an established hierarchy, requiring the payment of membership and chapter dues paid from drug trafficking and robberies. The indictment alleges that members of group committed acts of violence against other street gangs to protect and defend Latin King territory and against members of the Latin Kings as punishment for violating gang rules.

The indictment alleges that members of the gang distributed cocaine, crack cocaine and marijuana. If convicted, the defendants face up to life imprisonment on the racketeering charges, and from 10 years to life on the drug-trafficking conspiracy charge.

The specific murder allegations include the following:

- On or about Feb. 10, 2002 - the murder of Jeffrey Becker
- On or about Nov. 10, 2002 - the murder of Jorge Claudio
- On or about Jan. 18, 2003 - the murder of Christian Ferrer
- On or about April 19, 2003 - the alleged murder of Kevin Hirschfield

In announcing the indictment today, U.S. Attorney Steven M. Biskupic stated that the charges and the arrests signify the commitment of federal, state and local law enforcement to aggressively attack gangs and gang crimes. "We intend to overwhelm this gang and others in the same way the gangs overwhelm Milwaukee neighborhoods."

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has tasked each U.S. Attorney with developing strategies to attack gangs and gang violence. In Milwaukee, state and federal prosecutors are working side-by-side with agents from the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area), the FBI Safe Streets Initiative, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) Gun Task Force, and the Milwaukee Police Department Gang Unit to identify, investigate and prosecute the gangs and gang members most effecting the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Biskupic added, "Cases of this dimension do not come together without a great deal of hard work by individual agents and prosecutors. I particularly want to recognize the excellent work of agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, officers with the Milwaukee Police Department, Assistant District Attorney David Robles of the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, and Mario Gonzales of the United States Attorney's Office."

This case was investigated by: the HIDTA Gang Task Force, the Milwaukee Police Department, the FBI, the ATF, Wisconsin Department of Justice - Division of Criminal Investigation, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, West Allis Police Department, Cudahy Police Department, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Lake Winnebago Drug Task Force, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The public is cautioned that an indictment is merely the formal method of returning charges against an individual and does not constitute inference of his or her guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until such time, if ever, that the government established his or her guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.